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EDITORIALS



Cathy Hatcher of Chicago braves the elements Tuesday in the South Loop. CHRIS WALKER/TRIBUNE

Warm-and-fuzzy weather

It's a cruel winter so far. The economy has the chills, there's a ruthless cold going around and people are worried about their jobs, their kids' education, their retirement. Christmas won't be as elaborate this year, and the gym membership might have to lapse, pre-empting those New Year's resolutions. The post-holiday sales will be overrun with people exchanging gifts for cash.

This would be a good year for a merciful Mother Nature to bless us with one of those gentle Decembers that really drives home the point about global warming.

Fat chance.

Instead, we're expecting enough snow to ice the record for the wettest year in history. We've already witnessed the coldest Bears game ever. The mercury barely reached 4 degrees on Monday.

Car windows and garage doors are frozen shut. Every night, we have to play musical parking spaces so the plows can do our street (or not). Our fingers are so cold, we're afraid they'll snap off if we bump them on something. We can't even feel our toes.

The sidewalks are treacherous, but *someone* has to walk the dog.

Those of us who have to work are weighing our options: Drive to work and risk having to crawl home in a blinding snowstorm, or take mass transit and turn into a popsicle at the bus stop.

Here's how to stay warm:

Instead of brushing past that Streetwise vendor on your way out of Starbucks, buy an extra cup of hot chocolate and make a gift of it.

That stranger pleading for spare change could use a couple of bucks. Don't have anything smaller than a twenty? Make his day, and yours.

Tip your cabbie generously. God knows you're grateful for the ride.

If you don't have money to spare, you can still help melt the misery.

Shovel your neighbor's sidewalk. (If you have a snowblower and a teenager, you can get the whole block done.)

Walk your neighbor's dog.

Don't shove to get on the bus or train. Smile. We're all in this together.

Yield the right-of-way, especially to pedestrians.

Let the other guy have the primo parking spot.